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APRIL 3RD, 1866.

JAMES HUNT, ESQ., PH.D., F.S.A., F.R.S.L., PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and confirmed.

The Fellows elected since the previous meeting were announced as follows:—Captain Christopher J. Barnard, 4th W.I. Regiment, Sierra Leone; Edmund F. Davis, Esq., Tavistock House, Tavistock Square; Sir John Gardiner, Bart., Reform Club, Pall Mall; Crewe Alston, Esq., 38, Belsize Park, Hampstead; Frank Wilson, Esq., 41, Arlington Street, Glasgow, and Fernando Po; Samuel Cheetham, Esq., Roslin Villa, Oxtou, Cheshire, and Fernando Po; Captain C. R. Williams, 4th W.I. Regiment, Sierra Leone.

The following Local Secretary was elected:—Mark Antony Lower, Esq., F.S.A., Lewes.

The following presents were acknowledged, and thanks were voted for the same:—Official Report on the Andaman Islands (Dr. Hunt); Wilson, Philosophy of Classification (T. Bendyshe); Descriptive Catalogue of Rackstrow's Museum (G. W. Marshall, Esq., LL.M.); Garliglietti, Dutch Anthropology (Dr. J. Barnard Davis).

Mr. HIGGINS stated that the following letter had been received from Dr. Calloway, the Local Secretary of the Society at Natal:—

“Spring Vale, Natal, Jan. 26, 1866.

“DEAR SIR.—I notice in Blake's translation of Broca's work *On Hybridity in the Genus Homo*, p. 53, an allusion to the Australian custom of killing the weakest of two new-born twins, which the author finds it difficult to credit, thinking it ‘improbable and inexplicable’. At the same time he supposes that, in the precariousness of savage life, and the uncertain supply of nourishment, a mother who would not find it easy to rear one child, may resign herself to sacrificing one of twins to save the other.

“It is rather remarkable when infanticide has been so common a crime among the most highly civilised nations, that M. Broca should imagine that savages would feel any difficulty in committing such murders; and advance the opinion that if they killed either new-born Mulattoes for one cause, or one of twins for another, it would evidence so great a want of maternal love on the part of the females, as would warrant us in denying them the right to be regarded as belonging to the human race. But many things which appear absolutely improbable, and even impossible from a European standing point, are found on a more intimate acquaintance with savage races, to be common, every-day occurrences; and what we should regard as a crime, the savage often considers as a necessity, and even as a virtue.

“It is impossible to determine theoretically what shall be the result, in any particular case, of a contest between instincts. An instinct may be undeveloped, dormant, or suppressed by a stronger

instinct ; it would be a great mistake, therefore, to conclude from the absence of manifestaton, that it does not exist. The love of offspring is a very strong instinct among the natives of South Africa—stronger, perhaps, than any other, but the love of life. Yet parents would, under certain circumstances, leave their offspring to perish, or even kill their infants, to ensure their own safety, or even the probability of their escaping disease or death.

“But my object in writing is not to discuss a general question of this kind ; but to say that the custom of killing one of twins exists among certain tribes and families of Kafirs ; and to explain, for the information of Members of the Anthropological Society, the native reasons for the custom, which will be found to be a strange superstition, having for its object the preservation of the life of the parents, especially of the father.

“Among some tribes the birth of twins is of rare occurrence ; among others not unusual. With the latter the twins are allowed to grow up ; with the former it is regarded as a prodigy, and one of the twins is killed. The two children are carefully inspected, and the most delicate one has a clod of earth placed in its mouth, and is thus subjected to a slow death by suffocation. When dead it is buried near the doorway of the hut, and the *ikgena*, a dwarf aloe, is planted over the grave.

“The reason for this procedure is said to be that, if both were allowed to grow up, they would cause the death of one of their parents ; or, as they express it, ‘If both are allowed to live, there is some one who will leave them ;’ that is, one of the parents will die, and leave them orphans. The injurious influence supposed to be exerted by the twins on the father or mother may not manifest itself for many years, not till puberty, or not even till they are twenty years old. The woman who bears them, if both are allowed to live, is said rapidly to become old and incapable of bearing children.

“If the influence does not kill either of the parents, the twins will kill each other by inducing disease in each other. Such is the superstition, and it is evident that all twins can be readily made to fulfil the prophecies uttered at their birth by old crones ; for any disease, arising in the parents or in the twins themselves, will be ever regarded as having for its cause the survival of both the twins.

“It sometimes happens that a man, more sensible than the rest, or having the instinct of child-love more developed, objects to have either of his children killed. The old men and women of the village at once gather round him, and recall numerous instances in which fatal consequences resulted from allowing both children to live ; until at length fear overcomes his good sense and paternal love, and the child is sacrificed. In one instance a man, in whose family twin-births had been common, married the woman of a tribe in which they were unusual. In due course she gave birth to twins. Her friends assembled, and said it was necessary to kill one to ward off ill luck. The man objected, that to have twins was a natural thing among his people, and would not allow either child to be killed. When the twins were about fourteen years old, the mother became delicate ; of course her friends attributed her illness to the obstinacy of the hus-

band, and would not listen to the argument, that had one been killed she would have suffered from the same disease notwithstanding.

"The murdered child is buried near the doorway, it is said, for the sake of the survivor. It is supposed that the surviving infant will miss the companion to which it has been so long accustomed during intra-uterine life, and a soothing influence is thought to issue from the grave. When the child cries it is supposed to be crying and pining for its companion, and is taken to the grave, and carried backwards and forwards over it till it is quiet. It is also daily washed on the grave. This is why the grave is made so near the hut, as it would be inconvenient to go to the usual distance of graves, every time the child cries, to get it quieted by the influence of its fellow.

"The aloe is regarded in some way as the living representative of the dead infant ; its spirit or shade is supposed to be in it, or to be hovering about it. When it is planted, its spines are carefully cut away that the survivor may play about it, and drag himself up by it, and make himself strong, as he would have done with his fellow-twin had he been permitted to live.

"A more strange, far-fetched, and inconsistent superstition can scarcely be conceived. You will see that scarcity of food, the difficulty of nourishing two children, the drag which suckling two infants would be on the mother's health, are questions which do not suggest themselves. But simply an imaginary influence, which it is feared will produce ill luck or death. The mother of the twins has little to do with the murder ; it is done for her by the crones of the village. But she is aware of it and accessory, and not merely resigned to it.

"If a child is born during famine, it is sometimes killed in the same way by placing a clod of earth in its mouth. In this instance the child is sacrificed with the express view of saving the mother, and preventing her strength from being exhausted by suckling, when her own system is depressed by want. Of course these customs no longer exist where the British Government exerts its influence.

"There is a similar superstition as regards inheritance. If the father dies, leaving numerous large oxen, it is supposed necessary that the son should slaughter them, if not, it is feared they will cause his death.

"I am, dear Sir, yours truly,

"HENRY CALLOWAY, M.D., L.C.P.L.

"You will find allusion to similar superstitions in Tylor's *History of Mankind*, p. 117, etc., and p. 292, etc.

"To Alfred Higgins, Esq."

A New Reading of Shell Mounds and Graves in Caithness. By JOHN CLEGHORN, Wick.

It is with great reluctance I venture to question before the Anthropological Society of London the conclusions arrived at by Mr. Laing on the graves and shell mounds at Keiss ; because I believe that any opinion which he may give on any subject, no matter what that subject may be, must be received with a deference that would not be conceded to one less eminent. As I can look for no such complacency, you need not wonder I have hesitated to bring before you views wholly at variance